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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Friday - September 29, 1944

SUBJECT: "THEY FIND CANNING PAYS" - Information from Farm Security officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

For most farm women, this has been a busy canning season. Maybe you have been among the busy canners. If so, chances are that one of your favorite topics of conversation with neighbors these days is what you canned, how much you canned, and so on.

Suppose today we hear some stories from the Farm Security Administration about what women in other parts of the country have done. First we might mention Mrs. S. B. Duncan of Franklin County, Georgia who is a champion among FSA borrower families. Mrs. Duncan goes in for quantity as well as quality--she usually puts up from 15,000 to 16,000 quarts of food a year. Yes, ma'am, you "heard me right!" Fifteen thousand to 16,000 quarts of fruit, vegetables, and meat a year is her average. She does it with a pressure cooker and some other equipment set up under shade trees in her backyard. Of course, she doesn't do it all for her own family; she also cans for about a dozen neighbors, who help her at rush times, and for a local boarding school.

But you say it's not fair to talk about such an extraordinary canner as Mrs. Duncan. All right then, we'll "talk about" Mrs. John Wilson of Jefferson County, Colorado. Mrs. Wilson cans only for her own family, and tries to average around 100 quarts per person in her family plus some extra jars in case her two soldier sons come home from overseas sooner than expected. She also stores and dries some fruit and vegetables, and cures her own meat.

In the "Show-me" state of Missouri, Mrs. Troy Fanning likes to figure her canning on a dollar value basis. She says the food she puts up and stores saves her

family of seven about \$1,000 in a twelve-month period. About all she buys is sugar, coffee, and a few other items that can't be grown on the farm.

Many women like to stress variety as well as quantity in food preservation, because variety makes more interesting meals and a better-balanced diet. But few women can boast of the canning record of Mrs. Betty Mitchell, Negro farm woman of Conway County, Arkansas. Last year, Mrs. Mitchell put up 35 different kinds of fruit, vegetables, and meat - setting a record in her entire community.

Mrs. Tom Berry of Platte County, Wyoming introduces a tempting novelty into her canning with elk and venison meat, brought in by the family hunters.

More and more women these days are working together at this busy season. With the G. B. Fryers of St. Francis County, Arkansas, it's a kind of inter-family affair. Mrs. Fryer has two daughters-in-law who have homes nearby. When canning season rolls around they bring over their pressure cookers and other equipment, and hold regular field days. Even the children and menfolk pitch in to help shell peas, string beans, peel fruit or tomatoes, shuck corn, and whatever else needs to be done.

One farm woman who deserves most credit for canning in spite of difficulty is Mrs. Earl Thompson of Scottsville, Kansas. Mrs. Thompson puts up several hundred quarts of food a year. In addition, she takes a man's place on the farm. Since her two sons went to the army, she has been running the tractor, milking cows, tending livestock, and doing many other farm chores. During one harvest season while her husband helped neighbors in a labor emergency, she shocked 25 acres of wheat, 13 acres of barley, and 9 acres of oats.

Somewhat like her is Mrs. Mae Darter, Arizona widow who is running a small poultry and dairy farm alone these days. Mrs. Darter has two sons in the army--a third is missing in action--and a daughter who is a nurse. She raises large flocks of chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, and guineas each year, keeps half a dozen good milk cows, and sells dairy products. Yet she finds time to keep her pantry shelves full of canned fruit and vegetables.

But not all the canning is done by grown-ups - no indeed. Many a child is pinch-hitting for a busy mother these days. For example, young May Kingsley, a 4-H Club girl of New London County, Connecticut, has been canning nearly 400 quarts of food a year since she was 10 years old.

Nor are girls the only youthful canners. Everett Skeels of Charlevoix, Michigan, at the age of 11, canned 536 quarts of food in a single year. He did it with the aid of a pressure cooker, and his invalid mother's guidance. His mother has been bedridden for six years, and directs his work by watching him through a mirror hung between her bedroom and the kitchen. Everett's oldest brother is in the army and his other brother and father keep busy on the farm. So he does most of the housework. To quote him: "Aw shucks, it's not so bad!"

Well, that concludes our canning stories for today. We hope the canning experiences of these women - and children - in FSA borrower families may give you some ideas of your own to use when next season rolls around -- or yet this year.

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